

# Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks:

## Intermediate Overnight Loop Trail at Mousetail Landing State Park

**Text and Photos By Fran Wallas**

**S**cenic views, a cedar glade, highly visible blue blazes in case of snow, and well-maintained trail shelters make Mousetail Landing State Park's eight-mile Intermediate Overnight Loop Trail perfect for a winter hike.

Mousetail Landing is near Linden on the east bank of the Tennessee River.

The trail offers a challenging backpack trail or a moderate day hike for an experienced hiker.

Dedicated park staff lovingly care for this state park and make everything easy to find. You will notice the carved trail-head sign "Eagle Point Backpacking Trail" on your right along the main park road. Continue a little further to the visitor center/office parking.

Registration is required for overnight camping at either of the two shelters. If you are a day hiker, you may want to register for a river campsite or a wooded campsite at the top of the hill near the park office.

Campgrounds are open year round, but the shower and bathroom buildings are closed in the winter.

Take a "Mountain Bike Trail Map" from the kiosk. The map includes all of the park's biking and hiking trails. Backpackers need to carry lots of water because there is no water at the shelters. You also need to be sure the water is protected so that it does not freeze. The good news is that you can leave your tent at home. The shelters will keep you dry and protected.

Now you are ready to hike from the office to the trailhead to begin your wilderness adventure. You enter Kelly Hollow along a creek. Your first surprise is that this hike has a lot of steep ups and downs through the woods. The next surprise is that you come to broad areas of flat open fields. When you get to a field, just look straight across and you will see the blaze and trail on the other side. Soon you will start seeing some big cedar trees. There in the middle of this West Tennessee forest, you will discover a Middle Tennessee type cedar glade.

In about two miles, you reach the beginning of a loop. The trail to the right leads to shelter one. The trail to the left leads to shelter two. Both shelters are only about a mile from this junction. The wooden shelters are screened and have sleeping platforms for eight people. Shelter two is on a bluff with a scenic view of the Tennessee River. This shelter is a wonderful place to watch sunset. Shelter one is tucked in the woods and gives you a real feel of wilderness. When you are ready to complete the loop, you will enjoy scenic views of the creeks, river, and an occasional white tail of a fleeing deer. Although the last part of the trail is a repeat of the first part, you will have a chance to notice what you missed before. You will complete the hike and start thinking of seven people to invite along the next time.

For information, call the park at 731-847-0841.



### Directions

The park is about halfway between Nashville and Memphis. If you are coming from the east, take I- 40 to exit 143 and go south on Highway 13 to Linden. Turn right and go west on Highway 412 to Highway 438. If you are coming from the west, take I- 40 to exit 126 and go south on Highway 69. Turn left on Highway 412 and go east to Highway 438. Now that you have found Highway 438, go about two miles, and you will notice a sign with arrows pointing left to the primitive camping area and boat ramp and an arrow pointing straight ahead to the main park entrance. Day hikers may choose to stop now to select a campsite along the Tennessee River. If you are anxious to begin your hike, don't make that turn and continue until you get to the clearly marked entrance to the state park.

#### Mousetail Landing State Park



(Fran Wallas is an avid hiker. She works as an attorney for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation in Nashville.)

**A campsite near the Tennessee River at Mousetail Landing State Park. Above, right: The backpacking trail through the cedar glade at Mousetail Landing State Park.**

